DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 209 184 SP 018 852

AUTHOR Womack, Sid T.
TITLE Individualized Instruction, Discipline, and Behavior Modification in an Alternative School Environment.
PUB DATE Apr 81
NOTE 16p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Behavior Modification; Behavior Problems; *Discipline Problems; Goal Orientation; *Grading; *Individualized Instruction; *Performance Contracts; Positive Reinforcement; Secondary Education; *Special Education; Special Schools; Student Behavior; *Student Responsibility

ABSTRACT

Withdrawn and disruptive students can make progress in an alternative school where they receive individualized instruction and attention with a system of earned credits and fines. The student body in an alternative school may be hetereogeneous, ranging from the borderline mentally retarded and learning disabled to the emotionally disturbed. Their ages can range from 13 to 19. However, the students have several factors in common: their personalities are out of control; they are seeking information about boundaries for their behavior; and they need success in a school environment. The academic work done by students can be a source of positive reinforcement if it starts at a point where success can be attained. By setting up a system where students must perform according to a self-imposed contract, with privileges and grades earned through a point system, both boundaries and goals are clarified. Misbehavior, such as showing disrespect for teachers or for other students, smoking, or cheating, is punished by penalty points taken away from the contract. The only way students can fulfill their contracts is to achieve the agreed-upon number of points, through classroom assignments, listening to lectures, or doing office work. Students accumulate and can "spend" their points on grades, free time, or other privileges. This method, based on an economy of trade-offs, rechannels 95 percent of the destructive energy generated by withdrawn and disruptive students. (FG)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED209184

INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION, DISCIPLINE, AND BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION IN AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

by

Sid T. Womack, Ph.D.

April 30, 1981

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sid T. Womack

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

018 852

INDIVIDUALIZED INSTRUCTION, DISCIPLINE, AND BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION

IN AN ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The Alternative School Milieu. Probably nowhere is the adage "Society sends its problems to school, for the school to take care of" any more apparent than in an alternative school environment. The students who are referred are students who have had or who have caused behavior problems in a traditional school environment. Students are not referred for academic failures only. Other avenues are available for academically deficient students to experience success--the alternative school deals with behavior primarily. The students who qualify for alternative school services are almost always classifiable as disruptive or withdrawn students. Other agencies apply other labels as they seem appropriate and as those labels function to increase the services available to the student. The combination of behavior problems are sometimes abbreviated W/D, or Withdrawn/Disruptive.

The withdrawn student is a relatively easy case to treat. The withdrawn student needs to re-develop successful patterns of behavior academically in order to feel comfortable in a school environment. It may be that other students in the traditional school setting have passed him by, and he is far behind. A loss of self esteem is understandable in those circumstances. Improving the quality of instruction will handle most of the problems of the withdrawn student. The kind of instruction described under Individualized Instruction has been highly successful in "restarting" students who have stopped achieving academically. It is not uncommon to see F students make A's and B's within two weeks after arriving at an alternative school where individualized instruction, individualized attention, mastery learning, and a token economy are used.

The disruptive student is not so easy to treat. Patterns of interruptive, insubordinate, physically threatening, or violent behavior have met with positive or negative reinforcement in the past. A reinforcer is any event that increases the likelihood of a behavior being repeated. An example of a positive reinforcer that is used frequently in an alternative school environment is the awarding of points for satisfactory academic work handed in. The positive reinforcement paradigm is one that is fairly well known. The negative reinforcement strategy is one that is not as well known or well understood, although students in an alternative school apply it with telling effect through intuitive or sometimes accidental ways. A negative reinforcer is an event that increases the likelihood that a noxious stimulus will be removed. It is a reinforcer in that it increases the likelihood that a behavior will occur. A common example is that of a student lying to a teacher in order to stop the teacher from accusing him of wrongdoing. The noxious stimulus is the verbally accusing behavior of the teacher--the student does not want to face up to the realities of his misbehavior. That communication is a noxious stimulus for him, because it has meaning that he finds unpleasant. It may lead to the deprivation of privileges which is a separate transaction in this analysis. If lying leads to the removal of the noxious stimulus, then lying behavior is reinforced, and it is more likely that lying behavior will be used again in similar circumstances. Nagging behavior is another behavior that is shaped by negative reinforcement. A teacher who gives in to nagging positively reinforces the student's nagging behavior and negatively reinforces giving-in behavior on her part. Giving in caused the nagging to stop temporarily, but it will be back in high strength whenever the student finds something that he wants.

A third consideration in the handling of disruptive students is aversive consequences. Aversive consequences and negative reinforcement are not the same thing. Aversive consequences, sometimes called punishment, are designed to stop a behavior rather than increase the likelihood of its occurring again. Paddling is an example of an aversive consequence if it is done to prevent a behavior from re-occuring. Paddling cannot be expected to increase the strength of a behavior, which is why at most alternative schools it is not used. The withdrawn student does not have enough behaviors--paddling to increase school achievement is not likely to work. Paddling to diminish excess behaviors of disruptive students is seldom effective in the alternative school environment because it is confused with child abuse with so many of the students. These students see child abuse as a behavior without logical explanation and a school paddling as merely an extension of that. The clinical management of reinforcers has been more effective in the experience of the author.

The alternative school mileau includes an extremely heterogeneous student body. Across thirty or fewer students in one alternative school, disruptive/withdrawn students include the borderline mentally retarded, the educably mentally retarded, the trainably mentally retarded, learning disabled, hearing impaired, and emotionally disturbed students. Dyslexia and partial aphasia are frequent. As a rule, the listening skills of alternative school students are not highly developed, whether they are diagnosed as learning disabled or not. Reading levels of arriving students may range from 0.5 to 11.0, grade level placements in school from seventh grade to twelfth. Ages range from 13 to 19. Problem behaviors leading to referral range from being uninvolved with school to drug abuse, theft, and physical violence. They have these things in common: their personalities are out of control; they are seeking information about where boundaries are; and, they are in need of success in a school environment.

The academic program of the alternative school is a big supplier of positive reinforcement. If there were no other reason for having curricula in social studies, English, and math in the alternative school, this aspect would be justification enough. These tool subjects relate most to the subjects that the referrals' contemporaries are studying back on the traditional campus. These subjects also provide a natural environment for the academic teacher to provide remediation in social studies, social living, reading, language arts, and basic mathematics. Most of the students who enroll in an alternative school are behind and failing in all subjects. The resumption of positive reinforcement for doing schoolwork is of vital importance. The starting point for the academic work may not be set very high, but it must be a point at which the student can succeed. Students earn one square per page of academic work (most pages; some pages earn more) that is completed to at least 80% accuracy. If the page is less than 80% correct, it is returned to the student marked Not Finished. If it is 80% or more correct, the number of squares (points) earned is marked at the top. This teaches students an uncompromising attitude toward the quality of schoolwork. Quality is not negotiable. Quantity is negotiable through grade contracts which students complete upon arrival the first day of their stay. How many pages of successful schoolwork will be done per week is decided by the student when he selects the grade he wants in each course. But the quality of work handed in to receive credit is not negotiable. There is no social promotion in a well-run alternative school academic program. Social promotion is a contradiction of natural consequences. The student who does not produce a sufficient quantity of mastered academic work deserves no other grade than "F". To do otherwise destroys all of the progress that is being made with that student in terms of discipline. Students who are seeking boundaries need to know when they have found them.

The following representative contract illustrates the setting of contingencies

The grade _____ wants in Social Studies is an A B C D (leave only one) for this nine weeks. He/she will pay for that grade as follows:

Each Friday, he/she may pay 25, 20, 15 or 10 squares to obtain the above stated grade. If payment is not made, a late fee will be charged of one square per day until the payment is made, not to exceed 5 squares. If payments are not made, or are lower than herein agreed on, Mr. Womack will give_____ the grade that he/she paid for unless he/she makes up the difference on or before the last day for grades that nine weeks. If _____ is not available that day, Mr. Womack may take squares from his/her account to make up the difference between what has been paid and what was agreed on. If _____ wants a higher grade and has enough squares, he/she may pay for one.

Date_____

Student_____ Teacher_____

Witness_____ Witness_____

Paid_____ Paid_____

Paid_____ Paid_____

Paid_____ Paid_____

Paid_____ Paid_____

Paid_____ Paid_____

A student may temporarily earn an alarming number of squares. It may appear that he will earn his grade early in the week and then feel little obligation to work the remainder of the time. Several things prevent this from being much of a problem. First of all, students rarely maintain such a pace for very long. If they were that motivated toward learning and success, they would not have been referred to an alternative school in the first place. If they are really all that reformed, they need to be placed back into the traditional school environment. Also, misbehavior is treated with penalty slips (see following page) which subtract squares from students' squares accounts.. These penalties lower the balances in students' social studies accounts, English accounts, and math accounts. (Each student has three accounts. The accounting methods are not unlike those used by banks for personal checking accounts.) Thirdly, students spend some of their squares for special privileges such as free time, radio rental, ping pong balls, pencils, etc. The check used by students for purchasing these things is also shown on the next page. The following page is a copy of the "bank", or success sheet as it is called, which is a record-keeping system for these transactions. It is one that was used the first day of a new nine weeks, which is why each of the three accounts for the students is at zero (right side). The tallies and Arabic numbers in the S.S. Sheets and S.S. Other columns show positive earnings of each student on March 30. The Spent column shows the contract grades (a reminder to the student every time he spends squares) and the amounts of any expenditures. The Fines column shows the amounts of any penalty slips that were written. The same functions are performed by the various columns in respect to English and math. At the end of the day, a new success sheet is prepared. Students with insufficient squares to make headway against a contract grade are denied the sale of free time. Students who fail a subject are not sold free time in that subject the following week. Students make an F if they do not have enough

Notice of Fine

Date _____

_____ is hereby charged _____ squares for:

_____ Smoking (5, 10, 20, 4th)

_____ Horseplay (10, 20)

_____ Playing (not on free time) (2)

_____ Gum (1, 5)

_____ Swearing, Cursing (10)

_____ Dress Code Violations (3)

_____ Disregarding Instructions or arguing (10)

_____ Disrespect to Teachers (20)

_____ Racial Slurs (10)

_____ Disrespect to Students (10)

_____ Lunch ticket error (1-5)

_____ Rest Room w/o pass (10)

_____ Talking in Hall (isolation) (5)

_____ Cheating on Schoolwork (5)

_____ Dirty work area after school (2)

_____ Other

Teacher (sign) _____

Student (sign) _____

BANK OF THE

V O C A T I O N A L E X P L O R A T I O N P R O G R A M

Neal Campus

DATE _____

Pay to the Order of _____ / _____ SQS.

_____ Squares

_____

_____

_____

NEAL CAMPUS--ACADEMIC CLASSROOM

SUCCESS SHEET FOR May 7, 1981

	S.S. SHEETS	S.S. OTHER	Spent Fines	ENGLISH SHEETS	ENGLISH OTHER	Spent Fines	MATH SHEETS	MATH OTHER	Spent Fines	CUMULATIVE
Harvey A.			X			*			X	-4,68,-7
Richard B.						X			X	47,-28,-8
Mike B.						X			X	15, -26,-40
Carl B.									*	44, 3, -10
Lawrence B.			X			X			*	-27, -22, -16
Charles B.										15, 20, 6
Charles D.										0, 0, 0
David F.										0, 0, 0
James F.										189, 151, 167
Van G.										12, 12, 5
Jose' G.										1, 0, -71
Debbie G.										19, 0, 15
Chris H.			X			X				-25, -17, 7
James J.										10, 6, 46
Marvin J.										11, -6, 5
Lynn K.										37, 12, 12
Mike K.										80, 30, 142
Dric L.			X			X			X	-47, -56, -32
Eddie M.						*				-30, -25, 3
Valentino P.										34, 11, 16
Denise R.										0, 0, 0
Ricky S.			*						*	44, 3, -27
Ricky S.										57, 69, 83
Carl S.										-27, 7, -81
Paulette S.										17, 34, 0
Ronnie T.										3, 13, 3
Jo Ann V.										4, 13, 3
Ricky V.									*	23, 20, 7
Wayne W.										-1, 2, 10
Joe W.										9, 1, 16
Alton W.										17, 19, 24
Cynthia W.										0, 2, 4
Ella W.										108, 100, 72
Leonard W.										10, 0, 4

[X] means that you bought a failing grade last week and are not eligible for free time this week.
* means that you do not have enough squares to be eligible for free time in this class today.
\# means that you are on disciplinary probation from free time in this class today.

The academic subjects exist to accomplish these purposes:

1. Provide a source of positive reinforcement--a feeling of success in dealing with a school environment.
2. Perpetuate the atmosphere of a school environment. It helps avoid the aura of a prison.
3. Prevent the deterioration of academic skills while operating away from the traditional campus.
4. Possibly remediate some learning or study skill deficits.
5. Give the students something to do.

Procedures and Procedures. Every student upon his arrival is presented with the grade contracts, a pencil, a check book, three folders for academic work, and a copy of the Shopping List (see following page). The folders bear his name and the name of the subject that is contained therein. Some papers are already included in each of the folders so that the student can get right to work. As he gains familiarity with the location of the individualized materials, he will be able to refill his folders with work of his ability. A paper which is not challenging enough for a student's ability is returned to him marked "R", which means Refused. In psychological terms, this is an extinction schedule of reinforcement. Too-easy-paper-doing behavior will undergo extinction after it is attempted a few times with no reinforcement.

In an attempt to meet the needs of these more-special-than-special-education students, several systems of individualized instruction were developed for each subject. Each system is an individualized system all of its own, and students could obtain an education working exclusively in any one of those systems. Most students prefer more of a variety than that, so papers from a variety of sources may be expected. On occasions when the classroom seems too "alive", and too many papers are being handed in, the teacher may designate one social studies curriculum, one English curriculum, and one math curriculum for all students to work from temporarily.

SHOPPING LIST

Activity	Squares
Free time	1 for 5 minutes
Radio, earphone	1 for 5 minutes
Calculator (not for classwork)	2 for 15 minutes
Bathroom, not on break	10

Fines

Smoking	5, 10, 20
Horseplay (dangerous)	10, 20
Playing (not on free time)	2 for each warning; warnings as frequently as instructor chooses
Talking, not on free time or about schoolwork	2 per warning
Cheating on schoolwork	5
Tardy	1
Unexcused absence	3
Suspended absence	2
Talking in hall (isolation)	3
Swearing	1
Dress code violations	3
Disregarding instructions, arguing, stalling	10
Disrespect to teachers	20
Gum	1, 5
Purchase a pencil	1 or 10¢
Racial slurs	10
Verbally aggravating students	10

Earnings

Each page written work	1
Listening to lecture	1 for 5 minutes
Office work	9 for 45 minutes

A fine of 1 square is like pouring 10 minutes work down the drain . . .

Usually, within a day of the arrival of a new student, a Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT) is administered by the couselor, and a reading level obtained. A student record booklet is given to the student for the Countries and Cultures social studies course, based on the reading score. The manuals for all S.R.A materials are located in the teacher's desk. An S.R.A. English folder is also given to the student, with a record booklet included, and the starting point is written on the second page of it. An S.R.A. Math folder is also assigned, with a Mathematics DrillPac record page enclosed. A starting lesson is designated on it, based upon the teacher's experience with the student's ability in math. The prevailing rate for S.R.A lessons successfully completed is two squares per lesson, no matter which of the three subjects the lesson is in. The folders and kits are checked one time each week, usually on Friday afternoon.

The following page lists all of the systems that students have for earning squares in each subject. The students are literally surrounded by success and opportunity. "Normal" students would come closer to realizing the education opportunities contained within the alternative school academic classroom, but these are W/D students. Sometimes they present the staff with problems that are beyond the effectivenes of individualized instruction, mastery learning, or the token economy. In-class isolation is sometimes used and is the lowest level of isolation. The next level is in-hall isolation, which is done in the specially designed booths in the hall of the main building. The next and final level of on-campus treatment for behavioral offenses is the three rooms located away from the main building. Isolation there is done for more serious, but no suspendable, offenses. Isolation gives the student time to think, and it interrupts the reinforcement (positive or negative) that is being generated for unsocialized school behavior. It is not punishment.

February 18, 1981

WAYS TO EARN SQUARES IN THE NEAL ACADEMIC CLASSROOM

Social Studies

1. C.V.A.E. Social Studies
2. Our Nation Social Studies
3. Countries and Cultures S.R.A. kit
4. Where and Why Nystrom kit
5. Reader's Digest books and worksheets
6. Book Reports
7. Creative Writing
8. Film reports, when films are available
9. Special interest assignments--see Dr. Womack

English/Reading

1. C.V.A.E. English
2. R.S.V.P. English
3. Mark II S.R.A. Reading Laboratory
4. Tenth Grade English
5. Hampden Learning Study Skills kit
6. Book reports
7. Film reports, when films are available
8. Creative writing
9. Special assignments--see Dr. Womack

Mathematics

1. C.V.A.E. Math
2. Basic Essentials of Math (100 lessons)
3. Houghton-Mifflin Individualized Computational Skills Program
4. ESP Applied Mathematics For Business And Home
5. ESP Money Management--may be counted also for social studies credit
6. ESP Clock And Time Related Problems--may be counted for social studies
7. Classmate 88 Teaching calculator--limited amounts of squares may be counted toward social studies or English.
8. Book reports--to be counted for math, the content should deal with math, biology, chemistry, astronomy, physics, military science, or some other body of recognized scientific knowledge.
9. Film reports
10. Special assignments--see Dr. Womack

For special assignments, the exchange rate of student's time for squares shall not exceed eight squares for one period's work. Some assignments which are not crucial to a student's education or to the operation of the Neal school may have an exchange rate of less than eight squares per class period.

A token economy rechannels approximately 95% of the destructive energy that a W/D student generates and turns it right back on him. It turns emotion into natural consequences. But there are those occasions when even the remaining 5% backlash from a student is too much for a staff to handle. Suspension is used at the alternative school where the author teaches when the student is adding an extremely disproportionate amount to the total workload of the staff. A student operating in such an unsuccessful mode is doing no good for himself either. Sometimes it is more beneficial to send the student home and try again the next day to have a successful experience. This is most appropriate when the stimuli generating his misbehavior are not located at school. There is only so much that the school can be expected to do. Society sometimes expects the impossible when it sends its problems (which it created) to school and expects the school (a reflection of society) to correct all the problems. Other agencies such as the police, mental health organizations, and special training organizations sometimes have timely contributions to make if they are consulted.